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ABSTRACT

The Teaching/Learning Center (T/LC) for "at-risk" students is an on-campus tutoring program designed to "desaturate" the local schools surrounding Jacksonville State University of excessive numbers of preservice teachers, to provide practicum experiences for preservice teachers under state education agency guidelines, and to serve an "at-risk" student population in the surrounding area. The T/LC operates under the umbrella of the Instructional Services Unit in a three-way program which includes a Technical Assistance Center and a Learning Resource Center. Preservice teachers engage in "hands-on" teaching/tutoring activities; computer managed instruction; planning and implementing instruction; preparing test items and giving diagnostic tests; and preparing alternative modes of instruction. As an extension of this tutoring program, the T/LC began a trial outreach program in the fall of 1990 for 79 "at-risk" students at a local elementary school. This special program targets economically disadvantaged students who cannot travel to the university site. If successful, this outreach program may be expanded to include additional public school sites. The overall impact of the T/LC has been to reduce the drop-out rate, increase students' test performance scores, and strengthen preservice teachers' teaching competencies. (Two tables of data are included, and an appendix contains a sample letter to parents.) (Author/SR)

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The Teaching/Learning Center for "At-Risk" Students: An Update

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Running Head: Teaching/Learning Center

Abstract

The Teaching/Learning Center (T/LC) for "at-risk" students is an on-campus tutoring program designed to "desaturate" the local schools surrounding Jacksonville State University of excessive numbers of preservice teachers, to provide practicum experiences for preservice teachers under state education agency guidelines, and to serve an "at-risk" student population in the surrounding area. The T/LC operates under the umbrella of the Instructional Services Unit in a three-way program which includes a Technical Assistance Center and a Learning Resource Center. Preservice teachers engage in "hands-on" teaching/tutoring activities; computer managed instruction; planning and implementing instruction; preparing test items and giving diagnostic tests; and preparing alternative modes of instruction (Wright, 1989). As an extension of this tutoring program, the T/LC began a trial outreach program in the Fall of 1990 for 79 "at-risk" students at a local elementary school. This special program targets economically disadvantaged students who cannot travel to the University site. If successful, this outreach program may be expanded to include additional public school sites. The overall impact of the T/LC has been to reduce the drop-out rate, increase students' test performance scores, and strengthen preservice teachers' teaching competencies. Tables are included.

The Teaching/Learning Center for "At-Risk" Students: An Update

Teacher education programs traditionally meet college and state practicum requirements for preservice teachers through a cooperative effort between local public schools and the college. One problem is that schools in the immediate area are often "saturated" with large numbers of college preservice students. A second problem is careful monitoring and guidance of these students by their college professors becomes increasingly difficult, considering the large numbers of students that may need to be placed. In an effort to address these concerns, the College of Education at Jacksonville State University initiated a special, award winning practicum program. This program is called the Teaching/Learning Center (T/LC).

History

Over the past eight years the T/LC and approximately twenty-six area schools have worked cooperatively to serve "at-risk" and gifted students, as well as other children who would benefit from individual tutoring. "At-risk" students are defined as those individuals who have an increased probability for school failure or learning problems because of factors associated with socioeconomic status, other family variables, physical

neurological abnormalities, potential suicide, or substance abuse (Shafritz, Koeppe, Soper, 1988).

The approach is to engage these pupils in one-on-one tutoring, using preservice teachers at the University site. As an extension of this tutoring program, the T/LC began a trial outreach program in the Fall of 1990 for 79 "at-risk" students at a local elementary school. This special program is targeted at students whose parents cannot afford the basic cost of transportation to the University. If successful, this program may be expanded to include additional public school sites.

The T/LC was initiated in 1982 under a Title III grant. This project was designed to "desaturate" the local schools of the University's excessive numbers of preservice teachers, and to provide practicum experiences for preservice teachers under state education agency guidelines. Preservice teachers must spend as many clock hours in practicum experiences as in the college classroom. The Center also functions as a successful on-site tutoring program, and was financially assumed by the University when Title III funding ended in 1987.

The T/LC operates under the umbrella of the Instructional Services Unit in a three-way program which also includes a Technical Assistance Center (specializing in early childhood and handicapped services), and a Learning Resource Center

(providing instructional support for classroom teachers and preservice teachers). The entire unit provides services for the University students and faculty, as well as to K-12 students and faculty from the surrounding area.

Objectives

The T/LC has three objectives for preservice teachers. These are: 1) to gain "hands-on" teaching/tutoring experience, computer literacy in computer managed instruction, and professional practice in communicating with parents and teachers; 2) to learn how to plan and implement instruction, address individual learning styles, provide alternative modes of instruction, prepare test items and give diagnostic tests, use multisensory materials and equipment, including kits, programmed texts, sound/filmstrip projectors, System 80 teaching machine, Audiotutorette, electronic digitors, and microcomputers; 3) to fulfill state education agency and University practica requirements (Wright, 1989).

Impact

The T/LC takes applications and recommendations for K-12 students from parents, teachers, and counselors concerning students that require assistance in subject areas related to the preservice teachers' academic majors. The coordinator of the T/LC provides each preservice teacher with an orientation to the tutoring program and then assigns University students

to work with specific "at-risk" children. Preservice teachers examine tutees' files, contact classroom teachers, and write progress letters to parents using the Appleworks 3.0 software on Apple microcomputers. (See example.)

Table I provides a 1990 summary of T/LC participation.

Insert Table I about here

Table II profiles participation by age levels and subject areas for the 1990 academic year.

Insert Table II about here

Recognition of the Teaching/Learning Center has been substantial. For example, it was recognized regionally in 1987 by the Southeastern Regional Association of Teacher Educators, and nationally in 1988 by the American Association of Colleges and Universities with the Christa McQuiliffe Showcase of Excellence Award. The overall impact has been to reduce the drop-out rate, increase students' test performance scores, and strengthen preservice teachers' teaching competencies.

References

Shafritz, Jay M., Koeppe, Richard P., and Soper, Elizabeth W. (1988). Facts on file. New York: Oxford.

Wright, Elsie L. (1989). The Teaching/Learning Center. American Association of State Colleges and Universities, Washington, D.C., Jacksonville, AL: Jacksonville State University (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 306 905).

Appendix

Example Letter

November 19, 1990

Mr. and Mrs. Carlton Terrace
712 Blythe Road
Jacksonville, AL 36265

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Terrace:

During the past semester I have had the privilege of tutoring Bryan in reading at the Teaching/Learning Center. At first Bryan seemed uneasy about his reading skills, but he soon became eager to learn.

I could tell from our very first session that Bryan was an intelligent child. In fact, it was very hard to find work that stimulated his interest without it being too advanced. He basically just needs a lot of time spent reading and practicing letter and word sounds. So, we worked on such as this by using the System 80, Instant Readers, and on-hand teaching talk.

Bryan caught on very fast to whatever we did and his performance continued to improve with each session. It was sometimes hard to get his attention, but once I got it, he worked very hard.

I have enjoyed working with Bryan this semester, and I am delighted with his progress. I know he will continue to improve with his new tutor, as he has with me. I think Bryan will have a very good and productive first year of school.

Sincerely,

Jeri Jones

Table 1

1990 Summary of T/LC Participants

Semester	Tutors	Tutees
Spring 1990	283	138
May 1990	90	42
Summer 1, 1990	114	52
Summer 11, 1990	96	48
Fall 1990	325	224
Total	908	504

Table 11

Profile of Children Tutored by Subject Area in T/LC (1990)

Subject	Local Elem.	T/LC Elem.	T/LC Second.
Reading	44	57	8
English	14	41	9
Math	13	57	25
History	3	3	4
Science	7	1	